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Cambodia: Sihanouk is under increasing criticism from disgruntled elements.

Sihanouk's advisers have warned that his once unchallenged position in the country is slipping. They reportedly urged him not to take a vacation in France this year, indicating that he might not be permitted to return. They also counseled against submitting a pro forma resignation to the national assembly, on the ground that it might be accepted.

These warnings came after one of Sihanouk's emotional outbursts during which he threatened to resign and turn over the government to General Lon Nol. Sihanouk has made similar threats before, although this time he went so far as to convene the crown council, a body which would choose a successor. He subsequently announced, however, that he had no intention of stepping down.

Nevertheless, the unusual candor of Sihanouk's advisers and the increased grumbling among anti-Sihanouk elements within the Phnom Penh establishment point to a mounting disaffection with Sihanouk's rule.

Sihanouk's troubles stem from the accumulated grievances of almost 15 years of heavy-handed personal rule. They are also the consequence of mismanaged domestic policies which have alienated even strong supporters. The recent growth of a Communist-supported dissident movement in the countryside has also cast fresh doubt on the wisdom of Sihanouk's foreign policies.

Sihanouk's position is still formidable, however. There is no logical successor in sight and the Prince's opponents are still divided and cowed. Sihanouk has also taken pains to keep the army reasonably satisfied and he has taken a number of steps recently to meet the demands of his critics.

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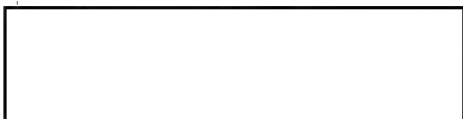
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